



THIS is one of a series of booklets for the use of study groups formed for the purpose of discussing problems of interest to the rural people of Manitoba.

Other booklets in the series have been prepared under the direction of a committee appointed by the Minister of Agriculture for the Province; and include the following subjects: Why Organize Co-operation? Credit Union, Wheat Study, Homemaking, Foods and Health, Public Speaking, Wheat Study, Soil Conservation, Rural Community Health, Recreation and a Guide for Discussion Group Leaders.

Some of these booklets are issued in French as well as English. This material is designed for the use of small groups, preferably from five to ten persons meeting regularly for the systematic study of the subjects chosen; and copies will be supplied free to all members of such groups.



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STUDY GROUP COMMITTEE  
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***Kay J. Russenholt***

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**IT IS TOLD:** *Away in the north, far beyond the land of the Strong Woods Indians, beyond the Great River which carries the Dancing Lakes down to the Big Sea Water, there lives a wonderful tribe.*

*There, where the sweep of forest o'er hill and dale has never echoed to the foot-fall of the Paleface, where the birds and beavers of the Dancing Lakes have never been disturbed by the clatter of his machines, this people has lived for generations.*

*All the secrets of the woods and lakes and rivers are known to the boys and girls who, through summers and winters of adventure, grow to happy men and women. So well know they the simple secret of working together that they are called by name the Shan-a-macs (the People who Pull Together, like the voyageurs in their great canoes).*

*Here, as he would have it told, begins the Message of their great chieftain Meri-ka-chak (the Friend of All Men), to our own boys and girls.*



Verses by  
H. B. CHIPMAN

*Edited and illustrated by*  
E. S. RUSSENHOLT

# *Meri-ka-chak* *His Message*





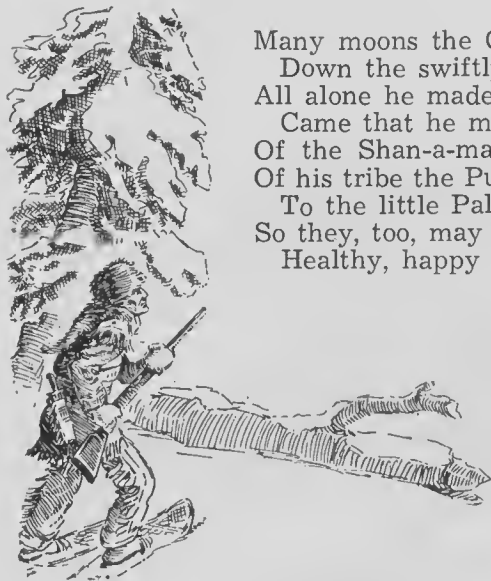
# The Chieftain

Gaze upon the kindly chieftain  
 Meri-ka-chak, Friend-of-All-Men,  
 Who from out the distant Northlands  
 Comes to bring a message to you.



Very wise is Meri-ka-chak  
 Without rival as a hunter—  
 None so cunning as a trapper  
 As the great chief Meri-ka-chak,  
 He whose name means Friend-of-All-  
 Men.

For since childhood he has studied  
 All the habits of the Wild Ones;  
 Knows the animals and fishes  
 Knows the birds, their songs and  
 plumage.



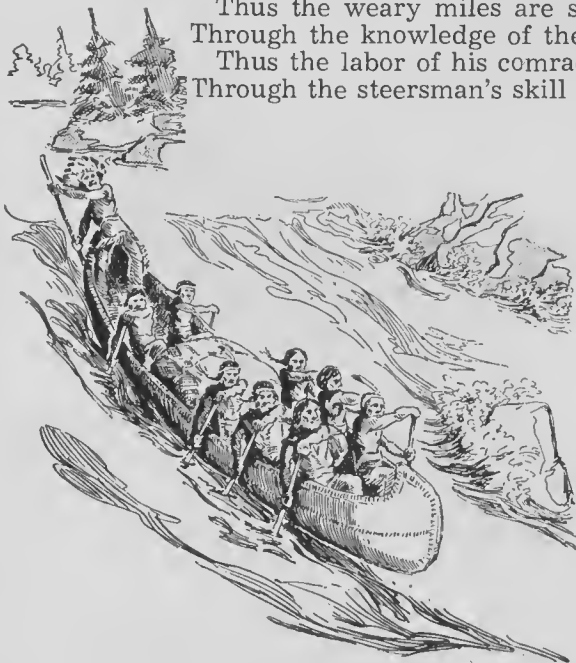
Many moons the Chief has travelled  
 Down the swiftly running waters.  
 All alone he made the journey—  
 Came that he might tell the story  
 Of the Shan-a-macs, his kinsmen,  
 Of his tribe the Pull-Togethers  
 To the little Paleface children;  
 So they, too, may live together  
 Healthy, happy and contented.

Listen, little Paleface children  
To the words of Meri-ka-chak:

Often down our Northern rivers  
I have journeyed with my comrades,  
Eight or ten of us together  
In our long canoe of cedar.

At the stern the steersman seated  
Very skilful with his paddle,  
Well he knows the course to follow.  
Long ago on former journeys  
He has noted down the land-marks,  
Some lone pine tree, high uprising,  
On some rock of strange formation.

Thus the weary miles are shortened  
Through the knowledge of the steersman;  
Thus the labor of his comrades  
Through the steersman's skill is lightened.





He it is who gives the signal  
For the start when dawn is breaking.  
He it is who in the evening  
Settles on the place for camping.  
Very welcome is the signal  
That the long day's toil is over.  
On an island, wooded, sheltered,  
Soon the great canoe is resting.  
From it food and robes are carried,  
Wood is gathered for the fire  
And the teepees rise like magic.  
Every brave alert and busy  
Working cheerfully together.



Yet, with all his skill and wisdom,  
Little could he do unaided  
When the rapids must be traversed,  
When the treacherous whirlpools threaten.  
Then above the roaring waters  
High and clear his voice is lifted  
Shouting, "All together, comrades!"  
Dripping, gleaming in the sunlight,  
Every paddle is uplifted.  
Downward in the foaming current  
As one blade they cleave the water!

So we overcome the perils  
Of the whirlpools and the rapids.  
Thus by striving all together  
Is our journey made in safety!

Often in the summer evenings  
I have wandered with my children,  
Smiling Face and Little Rabbit,  
Down the trails across the prairies.  
As we walked they asked me questions  
Of the animals and insects  
And the birds that flew above us.

“Will you show us,” they would ask me,  
“Where the plover’s nest is hidden?”  
Or, perhaps, as high above us  
Some great hawk would wheel and circle,  
“Give his call, and bring him nearer,”  
They would beg me as they watched him.  
So to please them I would whistle,  
I would give a call that brought him  
Swooping down from where he circled  
Till he hovered just above us.

Once we halted by an ant-hill;  
Watch, said I to Little Rabbit,  
How they all help one another.  
Very small indeed the ant is,  
Little can it do unaided.  
But their strength lies in their numbers,  
Thousands working all together.

## The Ants

Thus it was they built this ant-hill,  
Tall as you are, Little Rabbit.  
In it there are many tunnels  
Leading to the different chambers;  
Some in which they store provisions,  
Others which they use as nurseries.  
And their duties are divided—  
Some are warriors and hunters  
Others never leave the ant-hill;  
There they work, or feed the young ones,  
Or keep guard against invaders.

But no matter what their duties  
Each one faithfully performs it;  
Thus the welfare of the ant-hill  
Comes from working all together.



Often, as the darkness gathered  
Have I stolen to the river,  
And by moonlight watched the beavers  
Working busily together.  
I have seen them stem the current  
With a dam of branches woven;  
Filling up the cracks and niches,  
Using mud and moss to fill them.

Sometimes I have forced a passage—  
Through their dam have thrust my  
paddle—  
Then have hidden in the bushes  
So that I might see them mend it.  
'Twas not long before the beavers  
Noted that their dam was broken,  
And at once began to mend it;  
Each one bringing twigs and branches.  
Thus, by working all together  
Soon they had repaired the damage.

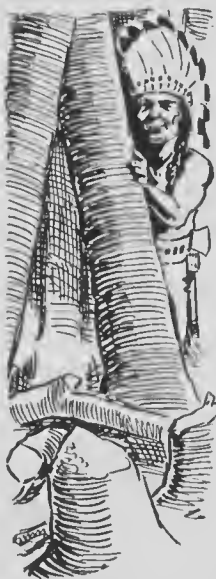


## The Beaver

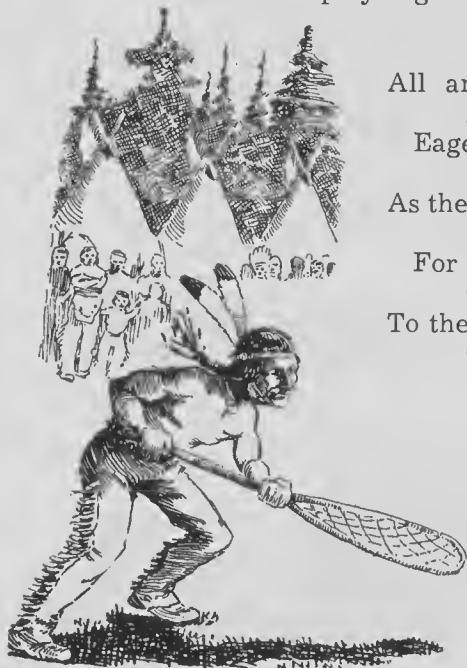
Sometimes in a lodge of beavers  
One there is who shirks his labors.  
One who will not help the others.  
As they fell and drag the timber.

Very soon his comrades notice;  
He from out the lodge is driven  
Never more to dwell amongst them!  
For amongst the busy beavers  
Only those who work are welcome.

Never need Ah-meek, the beaver  
Suffer hunger in the winter,  
For, while yet the streams are flowing  
Long before the river freezes,  
Ah-meek stores enough to keep him  
And his family from famine.  
They are wise, the busy beavers  
Working for the common welfare,  
Storing up against the future.



In the Autumn when the harvest  
By the squaws is reaped and gathered,  
Comes a time of sport and feasting;  
Then the young braves strive together,  
Race and wrestle with each other,  
Test their skill with bow and arrow.  
But the chief of all their pastimes  
Is Lacrosse, for so the Paleface  
Names our game of Big-ga-pa-way.  
Dearly do our young men love it.  
Teams they form to play each other  
Called by different names, the Panthers,  
Beavers, Buffalo or Foxes,  
Each team plays against the other.



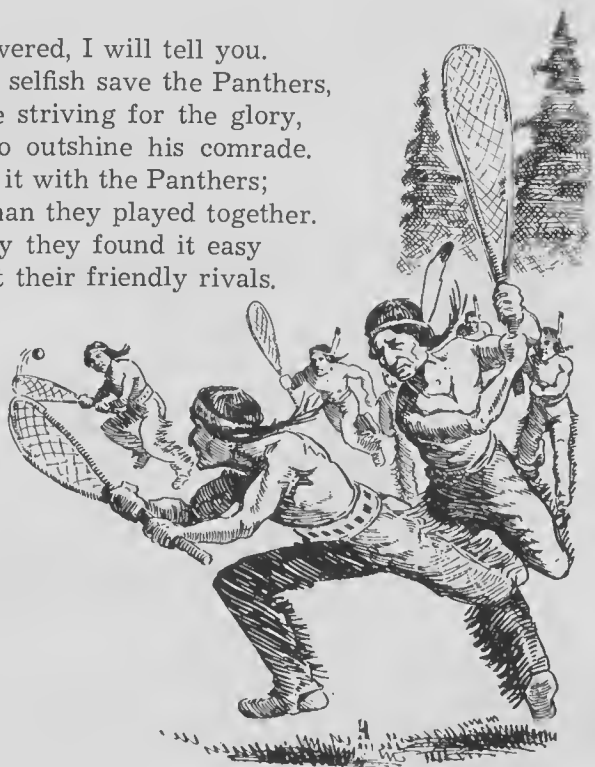
All around the tribe is  
gathered,  
Eagerly they watch the  
struggle,  
As the young braves strive  
together  
For the prizes that are  
offered  
To the team that wins the  
contest.

# Lacrosse

I remember how the Panthers  
Won with ease against the others.  
Though the Antelopes were swifter,  
Though the Buffalo were stronger.

Afterwards a warrior asked me,  
"Can you tell, my Chief, the reason  
Why the Panthers, though the youngest,  
Won the prize against all others!"

Yes, I answered, I will tell you.  
All were selfish save the Panthers,  
Each brave striving for the glory,  
Trying to outshine his comrade.  
Not so was it with the Panthers;  
As one man they played together.  
That is why they found it easy  
To defeat their friendly rivals.



Have you noted, Paleface children,  
How the wild geese, flying over,  
Cleave the air in "V" formation,  
Like a spear-head or an arrow?  
At their head the strongest fliers,  
And, when these at length grow  
weary,  
Others take their turn in leading.

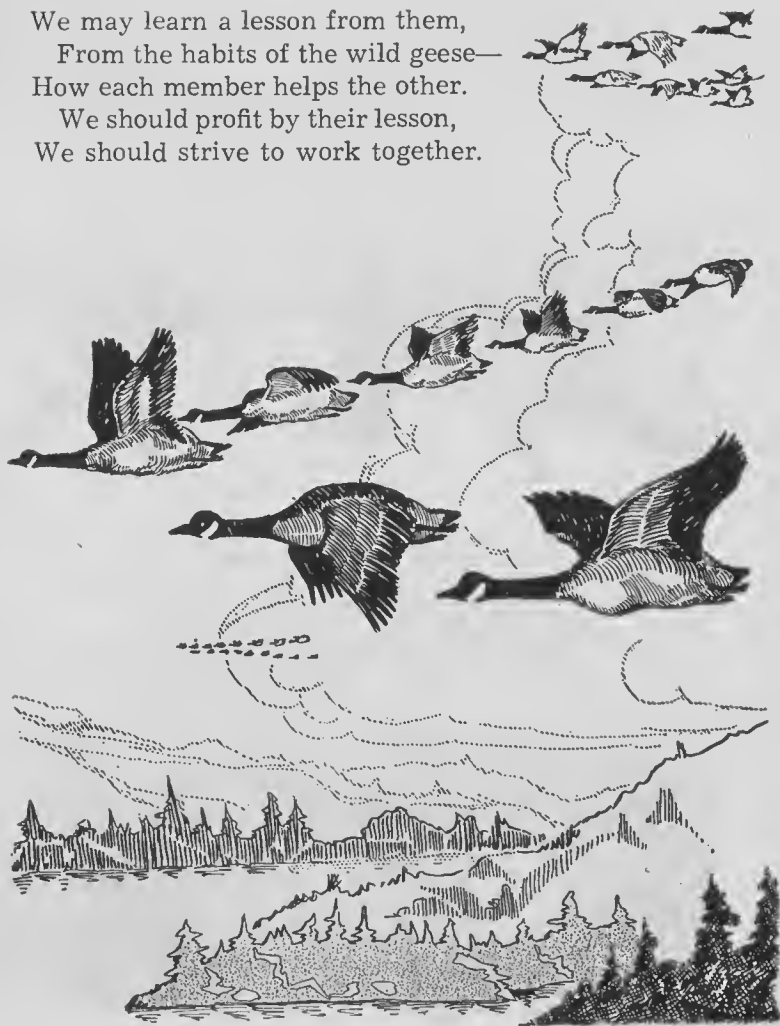
Thus the stronger help the weaker  
As they make the long, long journey  
North in springtime, south in winter.  
Have you noticed, how when feeding  
In the stubble fields in autumn,  
Always one on guard is posted  
At a distance from the others,  
So that if a foe approaches  
He may warn his feathered comrades?

Little chance the wily coyote  
Has to steal upon them feeding—  
Loud a warning note is sounded,  
Instantly the flock uprises!  
Strong wings beating all together,  
Up they soar with strident clamor.



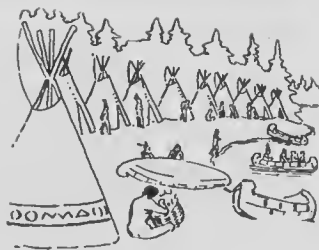
We may learn a lesson from them,  
From the habits of the wild geese—  
How each member helps the other.

We should profit by their lesson,  
We should strive to work together.

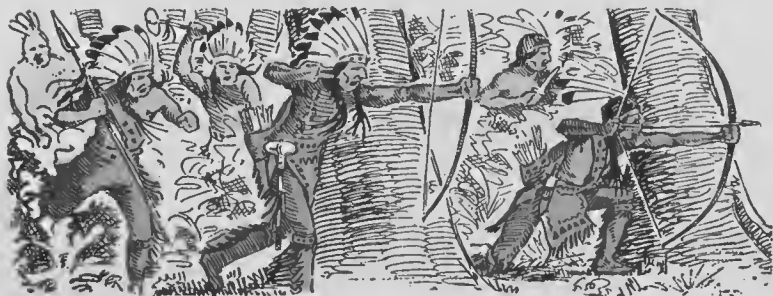


## The Shan-a-macs

Listen, children, to the story  
Of the Shan-a-macs, my  
tribesmen,  
In your tongue named Pull-  
Togethers.  
Long ago they lived con-  
tented  
By the lake called Great Sea  
Water.



Very close they held together,  
There were none who dared attack them;  
They were strong because united.  
Till, one day, the wicked Nah-min,  
Nephew of their good chief Wemo,



## The Pull-Togethers

Stirred up strife against his uncle,  
    Envying his wealth and power.  
Very treacherous was Nah-min,  
    Cunning as the wily coyote.  
And he gathered round about him  
    Others like him—lazy, greedy.

But their plotting was discovered  
    And when all the tribe was gathered  
Round the camp fire, at the Council  
    Wemo rose and told the story  
Of the treachery of Nah-min,  
    And the braves who plotted with him.  
“Kill them!” cried the friends of Wemo;  
“Comrades, to me!” shouted Nah-min.  
    Bows were bent and war-clubs lifted;  
But the good chief stepped between them—

“Peace, my children,” Wemo ordered,  
    “Let no blood be shed, but rather  
Let us banish them forever—  
    They shall leave our tribe forever.”  
Thus was Nah-min and his comrades  
    Driven forth 'midst hoots and hisses.



Very wroth was cunning Nah-min.  
To the Iroquois he journeyed;  
And, with lying tongue, he told them  
Wemo's tribe was on the warpath  
And had sworn to march against them.  
"Do not wait," he told their chieftain,  
"Till you hear ther warwhoop ringing;  
Arm your warriors and smite them,  
Take them by surprise and slay them."

Through the forest trails that evening  
Sped the Iroquois in war paint;  
And next morning, just at daybreak,  
While the Shan-a-macs still slumbered, .  
Suddenly the warwhoop sounded!  
'Twas the Iroquois attacking—  
Taken by surprise, outnumbered,  
Bravely fought the Pull-Togethers —  
Even drove their foemen backwards  
To the shelter of the forest.

In the breathing spell that followed  
Wemo called his brother to him.  
"Brother," said he, "For the moment,  
We have won, but it is hopeless.  
Soon the Iroquois will rally.  
We must save the little children  
And their mothers from the war club—  
From the tomahawk and arrow.

Choose from those who are not wounded,  
Twenty warriors to help you;  
And, though certain death awaits you  
Hold them off, until the women  
And our little ones and wounded  
In the war canoes are resting—  
Down the current swift are speeding!"



## The Pull-Togethers

Still our tribe the Pull-Togethers  
Tell the story of that struggle,  
How that little band of heroes  
Fought until not one was standing—  
Died, in order that their loved ones  
Might escape from death and torture.

“Northward paddle,” Wemo ordered.  
Many a weary mile they travelled  
Till they reached a land of plenty  
Where no man before had settled.  
There in peace they lived together.  
There they learned from ant and wild goose,  
From the buffalo, and beaver,  
How the Wild Ones helped each other—  
Taught the lesson to their children.

So this message now I bring you  
From my tribe the Pull-Togethers;  
From the Shan-a-macs, my kinsmen—  
*Joined together, none can harm you;  
Little can you do, divided!*



In our tribe there dwell two brothers,  
Wolverine and Flying Eagle.  
Very mighty hunters are they,  
Skilled in fishing and in trapping.

Once, when in the woods together  
Wolverine cried, "See, my brother,  
See the tracks that lie before us!"  
"Bear tracks," Flying Eagle answered,  
"'Tis a cinnamon or grizzly  
From his winter sleep awakened."

Slowly, warily they followed.

Well they knew that in the springtime  
Very savage was the grizzly,

Lean and hungry from his fasting.  
Silently they tracked the foot prints

Till they reached a gloomy cavern  
That had served the bear as shelter,  
Where all winter he had slumbered.

As they peered into the shadows  
Something stirred within the cavern,  
And a sullen growl like thunder

Warned them that the bear was charging.

As he burst into the sunlight

Both their bowstrings twanged together,  
And two arrows hummed like hornets—  
Quivered in the monster's body.

With a roar of pain and anger  
Swift the bear whirled on the brothers.

Wolverine stood nearest to him,  
'Twas at him the bear charged madly.

Unafraid the hunter waited  
With his tomahawk uplifted—

As the bear reared up to smite him



## Flying Eagle

Downward flashed the keen-edged weapon,  
While the warrior, leaping sideways,  
Skilfully the charge evaded.

How the combat would have ended  
Had there been one hunter only  
None can tell, so huge the bear war.  
But next moment it was finished!

Flying Eagle, like a panther  
Leapt, his warclub smote the grizzly,  
Like a thunderbolt descended,  
And the bear crashed forward, lifeless!

Thus it was that Flying Eagle  
And the Wolverine, his brother,  
Won their fame as mighty hunters—  
Thus it was they helped each other.



Listen to a story, children,  
That is told our small papooses—  
How the mighty hunter Keewis,  
Once, when tracking in the forest,  
Heard a voice amongst the bushes—  
(Such a little voice) that called him,  
Crying, "Help me, Keewis, help me."  
'Twas a tiny forest fairy  
In a spider's web entangled—  
Who, in spite of all her struggles,  
Could not break the threads that bound her.

Very gentle, Keewis freed her,  
Smiled, and whispered to her softly.  
"Fly away, my little sister  
To your home amongst the flowers."  
And the grateful fairy promised,  
"Very soon I shall repay you."



## A Legend

That same evening, turning homeward,

Keewis heard a voice cry, "Danger!  
Look above you!" Glancing upwards

Keewis saw a panther crouching  
On a limb that crossed his pathway.

Swift the panther sprang, but swifter  
Flew the fearless hunter's arrow—

Pierced its heart and laid it lifeless.  
And he heard a voice that whispered,  
"I have kept my promise, Keewis,  
Not too small was I to help you!"

'Twas the little forest fairy

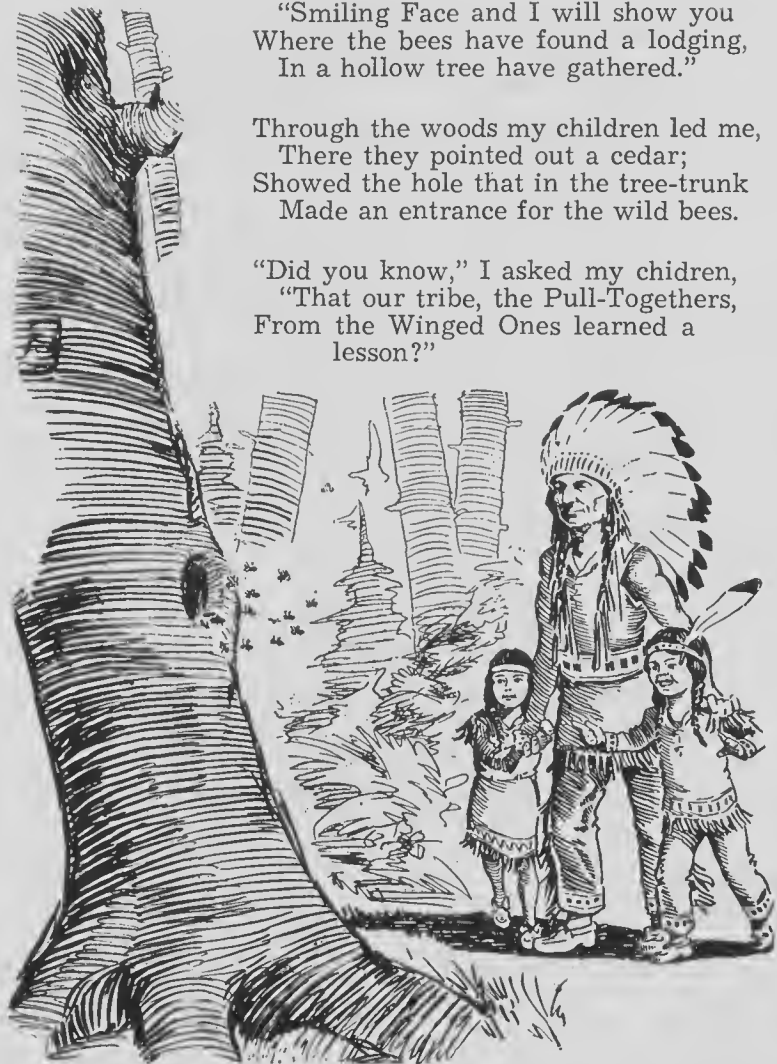
That had warned him, that had saved him.  
From this story learn a lesson

We should always help each other.

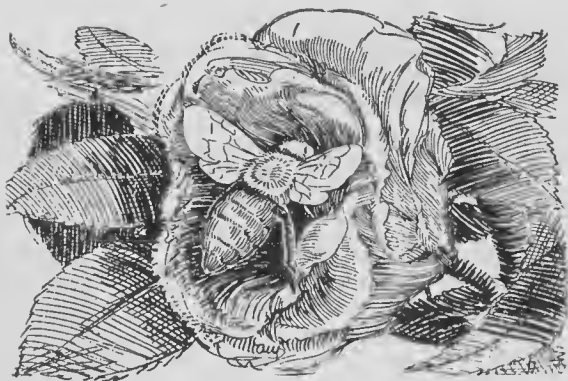
"Come with us," said Little Rabbit,  
"Smiling Face and I will show you  
Where the bees have found a lodging,  
In a hollow tree have gathered."

Through the woods my children led me,  
There they pointed out a cedar;  
Showed the hole that in the tree-trunk  
Made an entrance for the wild bees.

"Did you know," I asked my children,  
"That our tribe, the Pull-Togethers,  
From the Winged Ones learned a  
lesson?"



## The Bees



Then I told them how the wild bees  
Choose a place to store their honey.

Building, working all together,  
Never tiring of their labors.

Told them of the guards they stationed  
At the entrance to their bee-hive.

Every bee, with honey laden,  
By these guardians are halted.

First must satisfy the keepers,  
Otherwise they may not enter.

Thus it is, I told my children,

Smiling Face and Little Rabbit,  
That the hive is built and prospers

By the bees' unceasing labors,  
Working busily together.

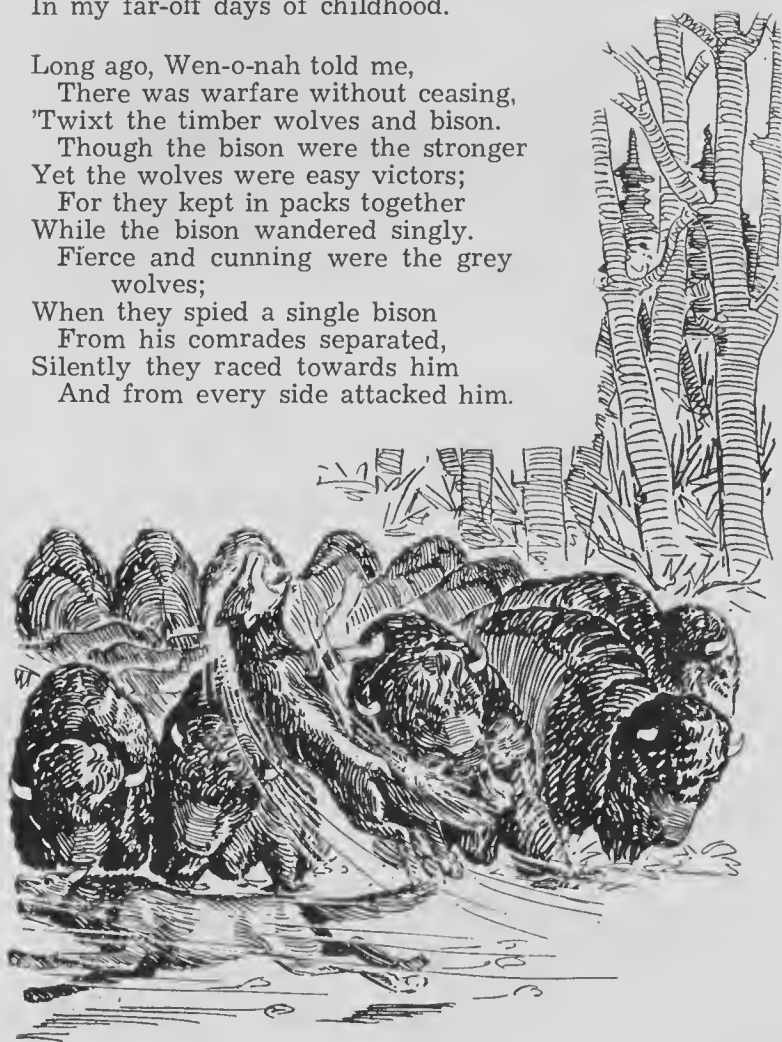
Long ago, the Pull-Togethers

Learned this lesson from the Winged Ones;  
That is why we live contented

Working for the common welfare.

Listen to a tale recounted  
By my kind old nurse Wen-o-nah  
In my far-off days of childhood.

Long ago, Wen-o-nah told me,  
There was warfare without ceasing,  
'Twixt the timber wolves and bison.  
Though the bison were the stronger  
Yet the wolves were easy victors;  
For they kept in packs together  
While the bison wandered singly.  
Fierce and cunning were the grey  
wolves;  
When they spied a single bison  
From his comrades separated,  
Silently they raced towards him  
And from every side attacked him.



## The Bison

As he charged the wolves that faced him

They would scatter, but behind him  
There would come a deadly onslaught—

Cruel fangs would snap his tendons.

Helpless, he would falter, stumble—

Weakened, fall an easy victim

To the cunning of the wolf-pack.

So, at last, they learned their lesson;

They, to win, must band together.

Now, when through the snow-clad forests,

Howling sweeps the gaunt, grey wolf-pack

Swift the bison form a circle,

In the centre place the young ones,

While around them stand the strongest,

Shaggy shoulder touching shoulder.

Never yet the wolves have broken

Through that circle of protection.

Those who, hunger-maddened, try it

Are hurled backwards, dead or dying.

"Ever since," Wen-o-nah told me,

"Have the bison kept together."



## The Wampum Belt

See the gift I bring unto you  
Children of the Paleface nations.  
'Tis a wampum belt, a token  
From my tribe the Pull-Togethers  
And your friend, Chief Meri-ka-chak.  
It shall be a sign amongst you—  
Let it be a bond between you.  
When you see another wear it  
You shall know him as a comrade.

For this wampum bears a message  
From the Shan-a-macs, my people.  
This the message: Work together;  
Help each other, Paleface children,  
As the beavers work together,  
As the wild geese help each other.

I would see you band together,  
Form a lodge with your companions,  
Those who wear the belt of wampum.  
I would have you meet in Council  
Once a week hold secret meetings.  
In my tribe the Pull-Togethers  
Every week we hold a meeting—  
One, at which the braves are gathered;  
On another night, their sisters.

In our Lodge we hold a pow-wow—  
Only those can be admitted  
Who can show the belt of wampum —  
Wolverine and Flying Eagle  
Guard the entrance to the wigwam;  
They must watch that no one enters  
Save those braves who know the pass-word  
And can give the secret hand-grip.

In like manner, I would have you  
Form a lodge, as we have formed one.

*Paleface children, I have spoken!*







*The Message of Meri-ka-chak is brought to you through Co-operative organizations who believe in it, and who are Pulling Together to pass it on to all men.*

*Would you like to hear more from the Great Chief Meri-ka-chak and about his wonderful tribe, the Shan-a-macs?*

*Write to the publisher.*





